

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00
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SS-15 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 SP-02 H-02
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R 081841Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5432
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 19976

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US
SUBJECT: CIVAIR: CONCORDE: INITIAL FRENCH REACTION TO
PORT AUTHORITY DECISION

1. SUMMARY--FRENCH RADIO JULY 8 AM INTERPRETED PORT
AUTHORITY'S CONTINUATION OF CONCORDE BAN AS FURTHER
EVIDENCE OF BAD FAITH HURTING CONCORDE'S CHANCES AT
NEW YORK. WHILE STORY BROKE TOO LATE TO RECEIVE
HEAVY COVERAGE IN ALL MORNING PAPERS, WHAT STORIES DID
APPEAR WERE NOT STRIDENT IN TONE. OFFICIAL REACTION
IS THUS FAR LIMITED; FOURCADE "DEPLORED" PORT AUTHORITY
DECISION. END SUMMARY

2. FRENCHMEN RECEIVED WITH THEIR COFFEE AND
CROISSANTS THIS MORNING NEWS OF THE NEW YORK
PORT AUTHORITY'S LATEST "DECISION" ON CONCORDE
THE PREVIOUS DAY, AND THEY DIDN'T LIKE IT.
BECAUSE OF THE TIME DIFFERENCE THE MORNING NEWSCASTS
HAD THE FULLEST COMMENT. FRANCE-INTER SPOKE OF
BAD FAITH, SEEN AS EVIDENCED BY THE PORT AUTHORITY'S
SEARCH FOR NEW EXCUSES--THIS TIME "VIBRATIONS"--TO
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PREVENT CONCORDE LANDING AT NEW YORK. ON EUROPE ONE
RADIO PIERRE SALINGER THOUGHT THAT CONCORDE'S
CHANCES AT NEW YORK NOW REMAINED VERY SLIGHT
AND GET SLIMMER WITH EACH PASSING DAY. IT WILL BE
A "MIRACLE" IF CONCORDE FINALLY DOES RECEIVE
PERMISSION TO LAND AT NEW YORK, AND FAILURE
COULD POISON FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONS FOR YEARS.

FOR RADIO LUXEMBOURG, CONCORDE'S SOLE CHANCE NOW
LAY WITH AN APPEAL TO THE SUPREME COURT.

3. THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE HAD A
BRIEF FACTUAL STORY ON ITS FRONT PAGE AND LE FIGARO
PRESUMABLY WENT TO PRESS TOO EARLY TO CARRY THE FULL
STORY. AMONG THE MORNING NEWSPAPERS ONLY
L'AUREOLE'S STORY IS A FAIRLY FACTUAL ACCOUNT WITH
A MINIMUM OF EDITORIAL COMMENT; IT NOTES THAT
ITS READERS ARE LIKELY TO LOSE THEIR WAY IN THE
"FRIGHTFUL LABYRINTH" OF AMERICAN LEGAL SYSTEM,
WHERE CONCORDE'S CHANCES HAVE BEEN SET BACK A YEAR
BY RESUMPTION OF HEARINGS IN THE DISTRICT COURT
AND THE CASE MAY NOW HAVE TO GO ALL THE WAY
TO THE SUPREME COURT. L'HUMANITE'S FRONT PAGE
STORY (HEADED "CONCORDE STILL BANNED") IS CONTINUED
ON AN INSIDE PAGE AND BEGINS IN RATHER STARTLING
FASHION WITH A QUOTE FROM A RECENT SPEECH BY
CHIRAC (SEE BELOW) ATTACKING THE US ON CONCORDE.
HOWEVER, L'HUMANITE USES THE QUOTE AS TARGET FOR
ITS OWN ATTACK ON CHIRAC, ALLEGING THAT HE AS
PRIME MINISTER, LIKE THE GOF TODAY, FAILED TO
DEFEND CONCORDE VIGOROUSLY ENOUGH. FOR
L'HUMANITE, US PROTECTIONISM AND DESIRE TO DEFEND
THE MONOPOLY POSITION OF US AIRCRAFT CONSTRUCTORS
EXPLAINS THE PORT AUTHORITY'S CONTINUING OPPOSITION
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TO CONCORDE.

4. THE ISSUE OF LE MONDE APPEARING THE AFTERNOON
OF JULY 8 CARRIED THE STORY IN A RELATIVELY BRIEF
ARTICLE BURIED ON PAGE 26. CONTINUATION OF THE
PORT AUTHORITY BAN REALLY DOESN'T CHANGE THE BASIC
FACTS OF THE SITUATION, WRITES LE MONDE, FOR WHILE
SOME FEARED AN EVEN MORE UNFAVORABLE DECISION (AN
OUTRIGHT, FINAL BAN) THERE WAS HARDLY ANY BASIS FOR
HOPE THAT THE PORT AUTHORITY WOULD REVERSE ITS
POSITION AND COME OUT IN FAVOR OF CONCORDE. FOR
LE MONDE AS WELL THE ONLY HOPE FOR CONCORDE TO
LAND AT NEW YORK NOW HINGES ON SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME
OF THE ACTION BEFORE THE COURTS.

5. LE MONDE GIVES MORE SPACE, IN A FEATURED
POSITION ON ITS BACK PAGE, TO CHIRAC'S SPEECH THE
PREVIOUS DAY (BEFORE THE PORT AUTHORITY'S DECISION

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WAS KNOWN) AT THE LUNCHEON OF THE AMERICAN CLUB
OF PARIS. LE MONDE SINGLES OUT CHIRAC'S WORDS
ON CONCORDE AS CAPTION FOR ITS STORY. NOTING
THAT IN HIS SPEECH CHIRAC SPOKE "WITH A
FRANKNESS SOMETIMES BORDERING ON RUDENESS",
LE MONDE QUOTES HIM AS SAYING THAT REFUSAL OF
LANDING RIGHTS AT NEW YORK WOULD BE "AN IMMENSE
ERROR...UNWORTH OF A GREAT LIBERAL COUNTRY LIKE
THE UNITED STATES...IT WOULD BE THE BEGINNING
OF DECADENCE FOR THE AMERICAN SPIRIT IF A DECISION
OF THIS KIND WERE TO BE TAKEN. IT WOULD BE
PLACING IN QUESTION A FUNDAMENTAL VALUE OF THE
AMERICAN NATION."

6. THERE HAS NOT YET BEEN MUCH OFFICIAL PUBLIC
REACTION. MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT FOURCADE TOLD
AFP HE "DEPLORED" THE NEW DELAY IMPOSED BY THE
PORT AUTHORITY. FOURCADE IS THEN REPORTED AS
SAYING: "OUR FELLOW CITIZENS CANNOT UNDERSTAND
THE AMERICAN POSITION, WHICH RISKS ALTERING THE
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE FRENCH
GOVERNMENT IS DETERMINED TO USE EVERY MEANS AT
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ITS DISPOSAL TO COMBAT THIS DISCRIMINATION..."

AFP ALSO REPORTS REMARKS MADE ON HIS DEPARTURE FROM NEW YORK BY STATE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION CAVAILLE, WHO IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID THAT THIS NEW DELAY MADE THE LONG WAIT "INADMISSIBLE" AND CONFIRMS THAT CONCORDE IS THE VICTIM OF A DELIBERATELY HOSTILE, DISCRIMINATORY AND INTOLERABLE ATTITUDE." CAVAILLE THEN DID SAY THAT THE HOLDING ACTION OF THE PORT AUTHORITY DID HAVE ON POSITIVE ACTION IN THAT HEARINGS RESUME IN DISTRICT COURT ON JULY 12 IN THE CONCORDE LAWSUIT.

7. THE ONLY OTHER COMMENT REPORTED BY AFP WAS THAT OF LUCIEN NEUWIRTH, RPR DEPUTY AND PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR DEFENSE OF CONCORDE. FOR HIM THE DECISION WAS AS MUCH ABSURD AS IT WAS MEDIOCRE AND HE SAW IT AS AN ANACHRONISM FOR "A CITY OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS, BANKRUPT, AND UNABLE TO COMPREHEND TODAY'S WORLD." IT WAS TIME, HE SAID, FOR THE FRENCH AND BRITISH GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND JUSTICE ON THE PART OF AN ORGANIZATION (THE PORT AUTHORITY) "WHOSE COMPETENCE IS LIMITED AND WHICH IS MONOPOLIZED BY INTEREST GROUPS." NEUWIRTH SUGGESTED THAT IF NEW YORK WANTED TO CHOOSE FROM AMONG THE AIRCRAFT IT WAS PREPARED TO RECEIVE, THEN FRANCE SHOULD PLACE IN QUESTION AGREEMENTS DETERMINING LANDING RIGHTS (IN FRANCE) FOR AIRCRAFT DEPARTING NEW YORK.

8. COMMENT: ALL IN ALL, THE INITIAL REACTION OF THE PRESS AND RADIO COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE.
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Message Attributes

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